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ABSTRACT

A study examined the nature of interactions that occurred among the participants of a two-year collaborative writing project with a particular focus on the manner in which they "positioned" one another. Subjects were three students (who were all in the sixth grade at the start of the study and in eighth grade at the end) who had participated in the Book Club Program in fourth and fifth grades, and five adults (one teacher in the Book Club Program, doctoral candidates, and a university researcher). Data included field notes, audio tapes and videotapes of meetings and interviews, copies of drafts of the children's written work, and samples of written work done by children in fourth and fifth grades. Results indicated that: (1) participants were primarily engaged in planning the paper during the first nine sessions; (2) participants drafted text, revised text, and revised and replanned the organization of categories during the next 11 months; (3) substantial modifications to the structure of the chapter were made based on feedback from the editors of the Book Club book during the last 5 months; (4) the first session established the tone for the interactions among the group members; and (5) the children wished to receive help on the process but were quite confident in their knowledge of the Book Club. Findings suggest that the concept of positioning can serve as a powerful means for examining the complexities of dynamic conversational encounters and may help educators understand more about the nuances of helping students work effectively in groups. (Contains 22 references.) (RS)

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Positioning and Authority: An Investigation of Adult/Child Collaborative Writing in a Non-School Setting

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Positioning and Authority: An Investigation of Adult/Child Collaborative Writing in a Non-School Setting

Interactions during school learning events among students and between adults and students have received increased attention in the past decade with the shift to theories of learning emphasizing the social dimension in learners' development. From studies of teacher/student interactions (Brown & Palincsar, 1989; Wells & Chang-Wells,1992) to studies of student/student interactions (e.g., Daiute, 1986; Slavin, 1987), questions have been raised about the nature of the interactions, negotiations, and roles of the participants. Recently, Harre' and his colleagues (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harre´ & von Lagenhove, 1991) have suggested that new ways of describing these negotiations must be explored. They argue that within theoretical positions such as social constructivism, which emphasize the situated nature of learning, descriptions of participants in terms of static concepts such as "role" may be too limiting. The purpose of this study is to apply principles raised by Harre and his colleagues to examine negotiations among students and between adult(s) and students during a collaborative writing activity.

This paper describes the two-year collaborative writing project among three children (all three children were in 6th grade at the beginning of the project and in 8th grade at the end of the project) and several adults. The purpose of the writing project was to develop a book chapter for an edited volume about the Book Club Program (Raphael & McMahon, 1994), an alternative for reading instruction that the students had participated in during elementary school. The chapter was designed to give the children the opportunity to present and discuss their experiences in the 4th and 5th grade Book Club Program, and as such, presented an interesting setting in which to study children and adults engaged in an authentic collaborative writing project.

The writing project was "authentic" in that there was a real purpose and a real audience. Students were both committed and motivated to engage in all aspects of the writing process from planning through publication. While the project occurred outside a classroom, the time spent on their chapter parallels a long term school research event such as a project related to a six-week thematic unit. Further, the topic of the chapter paralleled a classroom writing event in which topic choice was relatively constrained; however, unlike many classroom writing events, students had ultimate power and authority to determine the format and content of their contribution. Thus, while some features of this project differed from "typical" classroom collaborative writing projects, this project shared many similar features. Therefore, this study offers the potential to inform collaborative writing endeavors within classrooms.

In the collaborative writing project, the explicit goal was to tip the scale representing the authority (i.e., "power to influence") for both the process and the final written product in the direction of the children. In this research project, we sought to explore the fine line between providing too much or too little adult assistance when a crucial adult concern was to promote critical thinking and decision-making on the part of the children; to promote and maintain student ownership, voice, and control (i.e., authority) over the collaboratively written text; yet insure that the students would be able to successfully achieve the ambitious goal of chapter publication. Our primary focus was to examine the nature of the interactions that occurred among the participants in the collaborative writing project. Our particular focus was on the manner in which participants "positioned" themselves and one another (Davis and Harre', 1990) to accomplish their task: Completing an authentic high quality writing project that maintained students' ownership and voice.

Two research questions guided this investigation. First, how can the concept of positioning serve as an explanatory tool for examining the nature of interactions among participants in a collaborative writing project? Second, through what means do participants (adults & children) appear to position themselves during the collaborative writing process, specifically around the issues of designing a process for composing the text, topic selection, and the organization and presentation of ideas?

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Our conception and analysis of this collaborative writing project were informed by four areas of scholarship: (1) social historical theory (e.g., Wertsch, 1985) as the theoretical lens for this work, (2) studies of collaborative writing (e.g., DiPardo & Freedman, 1988) with its attention to related issues such as power and voice, (3) "positioning" (Davies & Harré, 1990) as a lens for exploring the dynamic nature of participants' interactions, and (4) oral discourse in educative settings and the stances teachers adopt. We discuss the contributions of each of these areas of scholarly research as they informed this study.

Social Historical Theory

According to Wertsch (1985), three assumptions underlie a Vygotskian social historical theoretical perspective: (1) individual mental functioning can only be understood as it is situated in a broader social, historical, and evolutionary context, (2) higher mental processes such as those involved in reading, writing, and academic discourse are social and cultural in nature, and (3) learning is facilitated through the assistance of more knowledgeable members of the community and culture. With particular respect to the third assumption, Wertsch (1991) argues that Bakhtin extends Vygotsky's general sociocultural approach through his exploration of ways in which semiotic systems in general, and language (i.e., written & spoken) in particular, can serve as a means for mediating human activity. Bakhtin's ideas are

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particularly relevant to this study and relate to O'Conner and Michaels' (1993) work on revoicing and DiPardo and Freedman's (1988) work on collaborative writing.

Two key concepts are reflected in Bakhtin's beliefs about semiotic mediation and are relevant to the study of collaborative writing: *voice* and *dialogicality* (Wertsch, 1991). *Voice* relates to point of view--to "the broader issues of a speaking subject's perspective, conceptual horizon, intention, and world view" (p. 51). For Bakhtin, the concept of *voice* applies to written as well as spoken language and is central to his beliefs about the key role that language plays in constructing meaning.

Bakhtin's notion of*voice* is critical to collaborative writing endeavors such as ours where we were concerned with examining participants' situated use of oral language to construct a collaboratively written text. The notion of *voice* was especially relevant to our project because we were concerned with maintaining each participant's voice (both in the oral discourse that occurred in meetings and the written work that was produced) and the manner in which the interactions between the participants' voices shaped the course of the project.

Dialogicality is the central notion in Bakhtin's work and refers to "the ways in which one speaker's concrete utterances come into contact with . . .the utterances of another" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 54). In essence, then, for Bakhtin, true understanding (i.e., communication) occurs when speakers can effectively orient themselves with respect to one another in the broader context of a conversational exchange.

The work of O'Conner and Michaels (1993) relates closely to Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality--like Bakhtin, they are interested in the nuances of speakers' attempts to orient themselves with respect to one another in conversational exchanges. Like Bakhtin, they also emphasize the "importance of dialogic (as opposed to monologic) processes in which many "voices" come into contact, intermingle, and reconfigure" (p. xx). O'Conner and Michaels explicate the notion

of revoicing as a conversational move in which participants of a conversation can be positioned and repositioned with respect to one another and with respect to the topic of the conversation at hand.

This notion of revoicing can serve as an interesting tool for exploring the subtle complexities of conversational encounters in a collaborative writing study such as ours. This construct might be employed to address such questions as: How do participants in our study use revoicing to orient themselves with respect to one another in conversational exchanges? How do children revoice their and the adults' ideas? How do their revoicings shape which ideas actually were considered?

Collaborative Writing

Attention to the concept of *voice* is central to successful collaborative writing endeavors. Research within this area has underscored the benefits of collaborative writing through findings that suggest that the products of a collaborative writing venture reflect growth that goes beyond what an individual writer may have been able to accomplish (Daiute, 1986). Further, current classroom settings that encourage process writing activities position teachers and students as respondants to one anothers' writing (Graves, 1983). In such positions, those responding need to be able to do so while maintaining the authors' voice and power within their papers. Researchers such as Denyer (1993) have illustrated how difficult this is for teachers. They argue that contexts such as a writing conference require discourse patterns that are fundamentally different from discourse patterns and power relationships throughout the school day which makes it particularly difficult for teachers' suggestions to be seen as simply suggestions, not "orders" (Denyer & Florio-Ruane, 1991).

DiPardo and Freedman (1988) suggest that effective collaboration means that students must have input in formulating the goals for a group task. They argue that it is critical to understand and/or devise ways in which adults and children can share

power within collaborative writing endeavors. For example, according these researchers, groups collaborate on writing projects effectively "only if members work together on a group-owned product" (p. 120). This, they argue, is an area in need of further study in the field. We propose that examining the manner in which participants "position" themselves and one another in conversational encounters within an authentic collaborative writing project can help us to understand voices "count" and further, what we, as adults and educators, might do to ensure that in interactions between students and teachers, students' voices receive "top billing."

Positioning

According to Harre' and Van Langenhove (1991), all conversations--written and oral--involve positioning. For Davies and Harre' (1990), "positions are identified in part by extracting the autobiographical aspects of a conversation in which it becomes possible to find out how each conversant conceives of themselves and of the other participants by seeing what position they take up and . . . how they are then positioned" (p. 48).

Davies and Harre' propose two different, but related, sources of experience that conversants draw on as they develop conceptions of their positions and the positions of other participants in conversational exchanges. *Indexical extension* refers to particular personal experiences that individuals might draw on to evaluate positions in conversational encounters. *Typification extension* refers to the manner in which individuals might conceive of and draw upon culturally established (hence, the term "typical") experiences to evaluate positions in conversational encounters.

For Davies and Harre', then, positioning must be understood in terms of: (a) conversants' purposes and what they say and do in relation to the social context in which they converse, (b) culturally-determined ways of perceiving interactions among people in different settings across different time frames, and (c) the ways conversants conceive of themselves and of the other participants within a

conversation. A key notion relative to the concept of positioning is that people's discursive practices are not constant--they change depending on context. Further, a conversation does not occur within a static context; rather, a conversational exchange is a dynamic, evolving process.

Teachers' Stances during Classroom Discourse

While we use the concept of positioning as a basis for examining adult/student interactions within collaborative writing encounters that occurred in this project, we also draw on research literature pertaining to oral discourse to identify stances that participants in our study assumed as they positioned and repositioned themselves and one another relative to the specific aspects of the writing tasks they were involved in.

Raphael and Hiebert (under review) have identified four stances that characterize patterns of interaction, listed in ascending order of teacher control: participant, facilitator, scaffolder/mediator, and explicit instructor. These stances have been researched in studies of teacher and student "talk about text," whether professionally published or created by the students themselves. The participant and facilitator stances involve the least amount of teacher control over both topics and turns.

The third stance of the teacher is to scaffold or mediate students' activities (**Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1965**), providing the temporary, adjustable support that metaphorically builds a "scaffold" to allow learners to achieve success where they may otherwise have been unable to do so. Thus, in this stance, the teacher is mediating the learner's activities through a variety of means, such as reducing the complexity of the task or guiding the students' writing or discussion through questioning. Finally, a teacher may engage in explicit instruction (**Pearson, 1986**) or direct explanation (Duffy et al., 1984), in which he or she assumes responsibility for introducing students to new information and new strategies and, in the process,

making visible to them the value of and conditions under which such new information/strategies may be useful.

We propose that this notion of stances serves as a means by which we may explore Davies and Harré's second point noted above (i.e., these "stances" represent culturally- determined ways of perceiving interactions among people--especially teachers and students in educational settings). We argue that since the four stances mentioned above are prevalent in classroom interactions (therefore, all participants are familiar with them), they serve as a reasonable means for exploring the ways that positions within occasions in the collaborative writing project may be viewed by project participants. They are not static roles, but rather, are the stances teachers adopt within various settings throughout a literacy event.

Because of the collaborative nature of the writing project we studied, the adults did not adopt a teacher "role." Rather, the adults employed Bruffee's (1984) definition of collaboration. That is, they attempted to "set the problem" (the writing of a chapter for publication) and organize the participants (adults & children) involved in the project to "work it our collaboratively" (p. 637). There were attempts to position themselves as "teacher," at times; as "participant," at times; as "facilitator, at times." These positioning attempts succeeded, however, only when the students positioned themselves in complementary ways. Thus, the dynamic interaction between positioning and stances assumed by participants was examined within the study.

In summary, the current study provides an authentic setting in which three students and three adults interacted to construct a publishable text. Issues of clarity, co-contribution, content, and so forth became genuine points of discussion and debate. The lens through which we examined the participants' participation was the concept of "positioning" in the collaborative writing project. We were particularly concerned with exploring the delicate balance of adult assistance in the process, and

the concomitant difficulty of creating an authentic environment in which issues of adult/child power change from that found in most classroom settings (Denyer, 1993).

THE CONTEXT AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in a midwestern urban community. Three children (Chrystal, Jason, & Jean) and three adults (Cindy, Taffy, & Laura) participated in the collaborative writing project. At most meetings, Cindy met with the three students who were writing the chapter for the Book Club book. However, Laura Pardo, the students' former book club teacher, met with the students three times during the initial planning phase of the project. Taffy met with the students and Cindy twice at points in the writing process when her assistance was solicited by the students and Cindy. There were twenty-eight meetings beginning in May, 1993, and continuing through fall, 1994. The participants usually met at the elementary school which the students attended through fifth grade for reasons of convenience, given the central location of the school from the children's homes and from the middle school which all three children were attending.

In this study, the writing process was examined within the social context of collaboration. The study examined the nature of the interactions that occurred among the participants of the collaborative writing project (the first author, the second author, the three children, and the children's former fifth grade teacher) with a particular focus on the manner in which they "positioned" one another as they planned their paper in the first nine sessions of the project. Participants' relationships are explored through an analysis of the discourse (oral, written, and gestures) of the interactions that occurred during these sessions.

The Participants. All three students have been participants in other Book Club studies. Students' names are pseudonyms. The students were volunteers from a pool of nine possible students who met the following criteria: (a) they participated in Book Club during both fourth and fifth grade; (b) they were interested in and

committed to the collaborative writing project; and (c) they were available to work on the project for an extended period of time.

Jason's participation in the collaborative writing project paralleled his typical participation in Book Club during fourth and fifth grades. In both cases, he was an active and committed participant. In Book Club during fifth grade, Jason won an award at the end of the year for being an outstanding Book Club discussion leader. In the collaborative writing project, Jason attended over four-fifths of the collaborative writing meetings. The few times that Jason did have to miss meetings were usually due to family commitments. Both Jason's parents work and he assumes a great deal of responsibility for taking care of his four younger brothers and sisters. (Three of his sisters are triplets in first grade.)

During meetings in the collaborative writing project, Jason actively and assertively spoke up to express his opinions and ideas. Jason's oral contributions to the collaborative writing discussions typically involved opinions regarding the content he deemed important to include in the chapter. When asked to describe the nature of his participation in the project, he asserted that he was quite comfortable sharing his opinions and expressing his ideas. Further, he indicated that he did so quite regularly during the course of discussions.

Like Jason, Chrystal's participation in Book Club during fourth and fifth grades paralleled her participation in the collaborative writing project; she was outspoken, assertive, and committed to the project. She attended well over three-fourths of all of the project meetings. Chrystal's participation in discussions played out somewhat differently, than Jason's, however. While Jason seemed committed to asserting his opinions regarding the content he deemed important to the chapter, Chrystal's participation was more directive in terms of the process of interacting during the meetings. Chrystal often strove to direct the conversation using such techniques as attempting to control access to the floor during discussions. When

asked to describe herself as a participant in the project, Chrystal asserted that she assumed a leadership role during discussions. Further, she felt that she had a great deal to offer in terms of content and ideas that should be included in the chapter.

Jean was much less assertive and spoke far less than the other two children. In fact, when talking about the nature of her participation in the project, she described herself as shy. Jean also attended fewer meetings than the other two children--attending about half of the total number of meetings. She was attentive during meetings (as indicated by watching videotapes of her participation in conversations which showed that she maintained eye contact with the speakers and signaled nonverbally her agreement or disagreement with body language such as nodding her head), but she rarely offered her opinions and ideas during discussions.

Jean had a history of being very committed to Book Club. She qualified for Chapter I services during elementary school; however, both Jean and her mother did not want her to miss Book Club to attend a special reading class, so Jean came to school an hour early each day to work with her Chapter I teacher. Jean's facility with reading and writing may have contributed to the nature in which she participated in the collaborative writing project. She often followed Chrystal's lead during discussions at meetings. Further, Jean produced little independent writing--most writing was done with Chrystal taking the lead for making decisions about both the content and the process of completing the written work.

Cindy, the first author of the study and the adult member of the writing team, is a doctoral student at a nearby university. She is a former public school teacher (nine years) and is interested in literacy instruction/learning for students at the middle- to upper-elementary level. She first met Jason, Chrystal, and Jean in elementary school when she spent time in their fifth grade classroom working on a Book Club case study project involving another student. Cindy saw her role in the collaborative writing project as primarily a facilitator; she strove to provide support,

assistance, and direction to the children during the course of the project while maintaining ongoing concern for the children's ownership and voice in the process of writing the chapter.

When asked to describe Cindy's participation in the project, the children said that she played the role of "the public." That is, she continually asked the students questions about Book Club and their writing that were representative of the types of questions a teacher or researcher might want the children to speak about in their chapter. Further, the children said that Cindy helped to "keep them on task" to get the project finished.

The other adult participants in the project included Laura Pardo, the children's fifth grade Book Club teacher; Taffy Raphael, a university professor and the project coordinator; and Judy Thompson and Voon-Mooi Choo, both doctoral students at a nearby university. Laura worked with the children for three meetings (the third through the fifth meeting) during the first summer of the project when Cindy was away for the summer and unable to meet with them. Taffy served as an ongoing consultant to the project. She met with Cindy and the children on two occasions when Cindy asked for her guidance to: (a) help the participants of the group to move ahead with the writing process at a point when they seemed to be "stuck," and (b) make a decision about the order of authorship for the children's chapter.

Judy and Voon-Mooi interviewed the children during the spring of 1994 in order to document the children's perceptions of the overall project and the process they engaged in to write the chapter. Judy and Voon-Mooi were not directly involved with the collaborative writing project or Book Club; thus, they were asked to conduct the student interviews in an attempt to get the participants to be more explicit about their thoughts and feelings regarding the project. They were invited to join the project because of the "outside" perspectives they could bring to the work.

This was especially true for Voon-Mooi since she is from Malaysia and could bring an "outsider" perspective to issues in American education, in general. Thus, her presence provided credibility and authenticity in our attempt to elicit information from the children about school in general and Book Club in particular.

Data Sources and Procedures. Drawing on the work of Erickson (19xx), we intentionally designed both the collaborative writing project and the study of the project to incorporate an insider/outsider perspective. We incorporated this dual perspective in both contexts because we wanted to be able to view the work we were doing in both contexts from multiple perspectives. By using two lenses, we strove to "make the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1986). In other words, incorporating this dual perspective in both contexts allowed us to "see" what we might not have otherwise "seen." All three children, Laura, and Taffy had an insider perspective in both contexts (i.e., Book Club and the collaborative writing project). Cindy had an outsider perspective relative to Book Club and an insider perspective relative to the collaborative writing project. Judy and Voon-Mooi had outsider perspectives in both contexts.

Data were collected from the spring of 1993 and through fall of 1994 using a case study approach based on methods suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Merriam (1988). Data sources include the following: (a) field notes taken by the first author throughout the duration of the study and the adult participants who interviewed the children (i.e., the third and fourth authors who took field notes based on their interactions with the participants during the interviews), (b) audio tapes of all meetings and interviews, (c) videotapes of all interviews and selected meetings, (d) copies of drafts of the children's written work, and (e) samples of written work done by the children in fourth- and fifth-grades.

Data Analysis. One of our primary purposes in this study was to examine the concept of positioning as related to negotiations that are a part of the collaborative

writing process. While our project was not completed in school, it parallels a school collaborative writing project. Our goal was to develop a better understanding of the ways that an adult (teacher) can position herself to use language tools (i.e., revoicing & questioning) to facilitate children's progress in collaborative writing.

The focus of the data analysis, then, was to develop an understanding of the role of the adult "teacher" in a student collaborative writing activity, to explicate the writing process in which the students engaged, and to develop an understanding of the interactions among the participants in constructing their written product. To that end, three analyses were performed on the data, based on qualitative methods of analysis described in Bogden and Biklen (1992) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1992).

We began by cataloguing the transcripts, field notes, and interview data. Next, as we catalogued the data we began identifying trends in the data. We were particularly interested in noting the "breakdowns" that seemed to occur in the writing process. As noted elsewhere (e.g., **Denyer, 1993**), these "breakdowns" can signify important transition points in the writing process. Finally, we were particularly interested in examining the ways in which Cindy used language tools such as revoicing (O'Conner and Michaels, 1993) and questioning to position participants in the collaborative writing project.

Thus, the analyses focused on three major aspects of the study. The initial analysis identified the process of writing in which the students engaged, including phases involving planning, drafting, revision and editing. Transition points between major phases of writing were identified, though the analysis recognized that the entire process was nonlinear and recursive with elements of the phases appearing throughout the process. For example, while most of the planning activities occurred between May 14 and September 28, 1993, students engaged in planning in later phases of the writing process as well.

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The second analysis examined the establishment of the context, including tasks, related activities, and relationship between the adult(s) (primarily Cindy) and students, as well as among the students. We examined the transcript and field notes from the first session, May 14, 1993, that included Cindy, Jean, Jason, and Chrystal. The analysis focused on defining Cindy's general stance within the meeting and the language tools (i.e., revoicing and questioning) that she used to position the participants in the writing process.

The third analysis focused on the initial phase of the writing process, as the participants planned their chapter. We traced the evolution of categories that ultimately guided the writing and shaped the final organization of the paper. The analysis examined how the categories emerged through the negotiation among the participants, with particular attention to the ways in which participants positioned themselves and each other in the process of creating and revising their plan for the chapter. Thus, the analysis began by identifying transition points that represented an "advance" in students' progress of category identification to guide drafting their chapter. Three significant transition points related to the structure of the text were identified within the overall writing process: July 16, 1993, and September 28, 1993, reflected categories that emerged during planning, while July 1994, reflected significant changes in categories during the drafting process .

Once these transition points were identified through triangulation of different data sources (e.g., reading the transcripts & children's drafts), and consensus was reached among the four researchers regarding the tenability of these transition points, we engaged in a three-step analysis: (1) identifying the categories that existed at each transition point, (2) tracing each category's "history" as reflected in transcripts of the participants' planning, (e.g., determining who initially offered particular ideas, the existence of other ideas that related to the category, etc.) and (3) examining the nature of the negotiations among the participants that may have

contributed to the construction and development of the categories ultimately used in the writing of the paper. Further, disconfirming evidence was examined by reading transcripts for ideas that had not become part of any formal codification of categories.

RESULTS

In the first part of this section, we establish the overall framework for the collaborative writing project. The overview of the entire project establishes the broader context we draw from to examine the portion of the project (i.e., the planning of the chapter's organization in the first nine sessions) that we focus on in this paper. In the second part of this section, we present an in-depth analysis of the transcript of the first meeting of the project and argue that the first meeting established the tone for the interactions among participants throughout the entire project. Parts I and II of this section lay the groundwork for our discussion in Part III, focusing on the positioning that occurred among the participants as they planned the organization of the chapter.

The final part of this section focuses on an analysis of the ways in which participants positioned themselves and one another as they planned the organization of the chapter throughout the first nine sessions. At two points during the first nine sessions (i.e., July 16, 1993 & September 28, 1993), the authors created a list of categories to guide their writing of the chapter. We argue that these two points (i.e., the establishment of major categories to guide the writing of the chapter) serve as key transition points in the planning phase of the project. We use these transition points to serve as anchors for our discussion of the participants' interactions and the ways in which participants positioned themselves and one another in order to establish a plan for writing the chapter. We trace the participants' interactions that led to the development of categories at these transition points.

Part I: The Writing Process in the Overall Project

The overall process of writing the entire chapter from May 1993 through the fall of 1994 incorporated the writing stages (e.g., planning, drafting, revising, and editing) that have been identified in the process writing literature (Applebee, 1981; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). These phases of the writing process in our project tended to occur in a recursive manner throughout the time the participants engaged in the writing project. However, we were able to identify three general trends that occurred over the course of the project.

During the first nine sessions through September 28, 1993, the participants were primarily engaged in planning the organization of the chapter. The second major trend occurred from September 1993 through July 1994. During this phase the participants worked to create and refine drafts of the chapter. Participants drafted text, revised text, and revised and replanned the organization of categories that guided their writing. However, changes made to the overall categories used to guide the writing tended to be relatively minor. Thus, the authors were primarily drafting their written work during this phase.

The third major trend occurred from July to November of 1994. In July of 1994, the authors received written feedback on a draft of their work that they had submitted to the editors of the Book Club book of which their chapter was to be a part. As a result of this feedback the authors made fairly substantial modifications to the structure of the chapter. Subsequent structural revisions made to the chapter after that point were relatively minor. The authors submitted another draft of the chapter to the editors in October, and revision requests were minor. Thus, after making the initial major structural changes suggested by the editors in July of 1994, the authors primarily engaged in minor revisions and editing of their work.

Part II: May 14, 1993--Establishing the Context for the Collaborative Writing Project

The second analysis examined establishing the context for the collaborative writing project in terms of: (a) the tasks and related activities involved in the project and (b) the relationship between Cindy and the students, as well as among the students. For this analysis we focused on the transcript and field notes from the May 14 , 1993, meeting (the first meeting of the project) that included Jean, Jason, Chrystal and Cindy.

We used two broad quantitative measures (i.e., *conversational exchanges, speaking turns*) to gain a general sense of the nature and quantity of each participant's verbal discourse. *Conversational exchanges* reflected segments of transcript related to a single topic. Topic shifts, therefore, signaled the start of a new conversational exchange. *Speaking turns* represented the number of times each participant spoke.

We analyzed the May 14, 1993, transcript in terms of: (a) the total number of conversational exchanges, (b) the number of times each participant initiated an exchange, (c) the nature and apparent purpose of each conversational exchange, and (d) the number and nature of speaking turns that Cindy took in the transcript. We analyzed Cindy's speaking turns because of our interest in the stance adults may adopt in working within students' collaborative writing contexts. We examined the number of times Cindy *revoiced* students' statements, initiated *questions*, referred to the "teacher" as*audience* for the chapter, and positioned the *students as "experts"* on the project.

Results indicated that Cindy initiated 40% of the conversational exchanges. Jason and Chrystal initiated 29% and 27%, respectively, while Jean initiated 4% of the exchanges. Thus, among the children, Jason and Chrystal initiated exchanges quite frequently and in approximately equal turns, while Jean rarely assumed such initiatives. Of interest is the fact that while Cindy initiated more of the exchanges than the children, there was a relative balance among the three main initiators of

new topics. These numbers begin to set the stage for an explanation of Cindy's role in the discussion.

We further analyzed Cindy's discourse in the transcript because we were particularly interested in explicating her role in the conversation and examining the manner in which she positioned the children to interact in the meeting. To that end, we analyzed Cindy's contributions to the conversation in terms of speaking turns. Cindy took fifty-six speaking turns in the May 14, 1993, discussion. Approximately half of those speaking turns seemed to be geared towards facilitating the conversation. For example, Cindy asked the students questions such as: "...What were your feelings about Book Club just in general?" Approximately one-third of Cindy's speaking turns involved positioning herself as representing the "teacher audience" for the children's book chapter or as less of an expert about Book Club than the children. The remaining speaking turns primarily involved Cindy's use of revoicing.

Our detailed analyses of the data sources from May 14, 1993, illustrated that the first session established the tone for the interactions among group members on the project. From the first day, Cindy positioned the students as the Book Club experts whose primary goal was to inform a teacher audience about Book Club from the perspective of students. Thus, Cindy positioned the students relative to the content of the writing; however, she also positioned them relative to the process of engaging in the project. From the first day, it was clear that the students would play an integral role in determining the process for writing the chapter as well as its content.

The following segment of transcript is the fifth conversational exchange that occurred on the first day of the collaborative writing project as students brainstormed ideas to include in the chapter. It illustrates the relationship between Cindy and the students, as well as among the students during the relatively open-ended discussions of ideas that teachers would need to know about if they were to

implement Book Club in their classrooms. Cindy begins the exchange by positioning herself as the chapter's intended audience -- a teacher who knows little about Book Club -- and positions the children as experts. Students accept her positioning and further support her move by positioning each other as valued members of the conversation . They attend to and build upon one another's comments and ideas as they jointly construct topics to include in their chapter.

Ci: Ok, ok you guys have all this stuff in your head about Book Club. You're talking to somebody like me for example. I don't know very much about it and you had to teach me, what are some things you would tell me?

Ju: Well you would have to read a book-would have to read a book uh everybody in your class has to, then when the teacher says stop reading we have to uh like get in groups then we have to-don't we have to like uh

Je: Write about the chapter you read

Ju: Yah.

Ch: We- We um We sometimes have a particular question to write about

Ju: What-What is that called? (overlapping speech)

Ch: Sometimes you have a free-choice ?

Ju: Like a character map or what is it?

Ch: Character maps, and pictures and ?

Ju: Summaries

As a result of this exchange, six different response activities are mentioned (i..e, writing about a chapter, addressing a particular question, free choice, character maps, pictures, and summaries) by the students in response to Cindy's initiation. She establishes that she is comparable to their real audience, a position she maintains and refers to throughout the chapter's development. Jason introduces reading a book as one important feature of Book Club, while Jean introduces the idea of writing in response to their texts. Jason and Chrystal build on Jean's suggestion, providing

details about the forms their written responses might take. They incorporate comprehension-oriented responses such as writing a summary or answering a question, literary response such as developing a character map, and other representation such as drawing a picture. Chrystal builds upon Jason's initiation of character maps, repeating his statement and elaborating upon it. Beyond initiating the topic, Cindy sits back and the students take control. Such positioning was not unusual in this first session or throughout the process of collaborative writing.

A second excerpt from the May 14th meeting shows both the consistency in the interactions among Cindy and the students, and further illustrates students' sense of empowerment and ownership over the writing process and content. Students are discussing reasons why they found Book Club to be positive experience for reading instuction. Again, all four members participated in the exchange and, again, Cindy's voice is relatively silent. She maintains her position as "seeker of information," asking "why" in response to one of their comments. Interestingly, during this exchange, Cindy bid for a turn in an attempt to turn the conversation to a new topic, in effect assuming the position as adult/teacher. Yet, the students do not accept Cindy's move and position themselves as orchestrators of the conversation. They work collaboratively co-constructing ideas about Book Club, accepting Cindy's bid for a turn only when they have exhausted this portion of their conversation.

Ch: I thought um book club was more enjoyable than

Ju: [overlapping speech as he attempts to finish Chrystal's sentence] *Just regular reading.*

Ch: than what we did this year.

Ju: Just regular reading and answer questions

Ci: Why?

Ju: Well , because, 'cause

Je: [assisting Jason who is hesitating] *Because cause in reading in Book Club we got to be with our friends in our groups and talk about the story but in reading now we have to answer questions sit at our desk and not talk*

Ch: You-you

Je: About the story

Jean introduces an aspect of Book Club that she valued, the way in which she could talk about the text, contrasting it with the model in her middle school that involves individually reading the story and answering questions. Her view is supported by Chrystal, who builds upon Jean's point, noting that she needed help with a particular book and could not get it from her peers. Jason then agrees with Chrystal and Jean's point. This is followed by a series of overlapping comments about the importance of group discussion and how much they want to continue the experience, now that they know about it through Book Club

Ch: You have to just you gotta discuss it with some you have to like if you didn't understand one of the stories like I didn't really understand that one story <u>My brother Sam is Dead</u>.

Ju: Hm.Hm.

Ch: I couldn't get with anybody and ask 'em. I actually don't understand this part can you help me with it? I couldn't do that and that kind of was hard for me not to ask somebody ...

Ju: Yah, because you're used to that

Ch: So I so if your-if you get used to it you're gonna wanna do it

Ju: You're gonn a you're gonna try to help that kid however you can

Ch: You're gonna wanna help people

Ju; Yep.

ch: And you're gonna wanna want hlep so you're gonna want to have the kid

Je: The group.

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Ch: Yah, you're gonna want groups

At this point, Cindy positions herself as teacher or leader, using a convention of saying "okay" to signal a shift in focus, and beginning to suggest that their conversation gets at one of the points that she was going to make. However, rather than simply getting the floor because of her static adult "role," the students do not accept her positioning move and continue to position themselves as experts providing her with information.

Ci: Ok actually that gets one of my...

Ju: And it's pretty interesting because you get everybody's ideas you

Ch: You get different ideas.

Lots of overlapping speech.

Je: You can you can we can combine our ideas and make it into a summary about the chapter that we read.

Ju: Yah yah.

The above excerpt illustrates that the students' contributions were viewed as important by all participants in the conversation--the students' felt comfortable and justified in maintaining control over both the topic choice and the turn-taking in the conversation. They listened to one another and built upon each other's ideas. Cindy honored the children's positioning move to maintain topical control of the conversation by not attempting to interrupt them a second time to change the topic. When they were ready to change the topic at a later time, she initiated a new conversational exchange. The children were positioned by Cindy and they positioned one another as Book Club experts who had a great deal to say about Book Club and about the way that they were going to engage in the process of writing a chapter to tell their future teacher audience about Book Club!

The analysis in Part II sought to examine the manner in which the stage was set for participants' interactions in the collaborative writing project. Through a

detailed analysis of the first meeting of the project, the context for interactions among participants in the project was established. The child participants in the project were positioned by Cindy and one another as Book Club experts who had a great deal to say about both the content and process of writing the Book Club chapter.

Part III: May 14, 1993 to September 28, 1993--The Planning Phase of the Collaborative Writing Project

The third analysis focused on planning the organization of the chapter and examined the positioning that occurred among participants as they negotiated the construction and revision of categories that ultimately guided their writing and shaped the final organization of the paper. This took place primarily between the May 14 and September 28, 1993 sessions. The two major anchor points used in this analysis are the lists of categories that the participants established on July 16, 1993 and September 28, 1993, though we examined the categories as modified during the summer of 1994 as a point of comparison for the earlier two lists.

Our three-step analysis in this section includes: (1) identifying the transition points, (2) identifying the list of categories at each transition point, and (3) analyzing the positioning among the participants as they negotiated the construction of the categories to guide their drafting.

As "outside readers" (i.e., Judy and Voon-Mooi) and "inside readers" (i.e., Taffy and Cindy) corroborated to examine the transcripts, field notes, and interview data, two transition points emerged in the planning phase of the project. These transition points are particularly relevant because they seemed to represent an "advance" in the authors' progress in creating the chapter. The first - July 16, 1993 - involving a meeting between Cindy, Laura, and the three child authors. Five tentative categories for the book chapter resulted from the meeting:

Categories on July 16, 1993

(1) What we wrote in our logs

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(2) How we did Book Club in other grades

(3) What we liked about Book Club

(4) Favorite parts about Book Club

(5) What made a good group

The September 28, 1993 meeting was the second transition point. Taffy, Cindy, and the three children were present at this meeting. The discussion that took place led to the emergence of the following structure for the chapter:

Categories on September 28, 1993

(1) What Book Club includes, e.g. logs, posters, groups, skits, interesting books, and class sharing time

(2) How things which seemed important to us worked, e.g. reading logs, log choices, individual log pages in the chapter

(3) Favorites of Book Club.

The final list of categories - Summer, 1994 - serves as a point of comparison for the two earlier lists. This final list reflects the ongoing planning that existed as students created their draft and the shifts in structure during this time. The outline used by the child authors during the concluding phase of the writing process is as follows:

Categories Established in Summer of 1994

(1) Introduction

(2) Book Club: Our General Definition

(3) Book Club Vignette

(4) Favorites of Book Club

(5) General Suggestions and Ideas for Teachers

(6) The Process of Writing this Chapter.

In the following section, we trace the evolution of the first two sets of categories listed above (i.e., July 16, 1993 and September 28, 1993).

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Evolution of Categories that Guided the Planning Process

We use the word evolution in the sense of change over time. Essentially, we traced how the categories emerged and subsequently were developed, accepted, altered or dropped completely from the chapter. Chronologically, the evolution of categories in this phase falls between the first meeting on May 14, 1993 and the ninth meeting on September 28, 1993.

The early emergence of categories can be traced to the first meeting - May 14, 1993 - among Cindy, Chrystal, Jean and Jason. The tone of this first meeting was open and cooperative; the participants engaged in divergent thinking to brainstorm ideas to include in a chapter for teachers about Book Club. The participants negotiated and collaborated throughout the meeting. Our examination of the transcript reveals that the children either responded to prompts from Cindy (who was considerably less familiar with Book Club activities than were the children), or they spontaneously volunteered information about their Book Club experiences. All three children initiated ideas which eventually developed into categories identified on July 16, 1993, and carried through to the September 28, 1993 outline.

For example, on May 14, Chrystal first suggested the idea of using Book Club at all grade levels, an idea immediately supported by Jason who added that it should be introduced in all schools. Conversely, when Jason talked about summaries and drawing pictures as important parts of Book Club activity, Chrystal added that pictures also existed in the mind when one reads a text. At the May 14th meeting, Jean was the first to talk about the value of the group setting that characterized the student-led discussion groups known as book clubs. Chrystal later expanded on the idea of small group discussions by suggestion that they include information about how to get a conversation started. Chrystal further elaborated on what made a good book club and the relationship between book club leaders and shy people.

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Jason was the first to talk about the importance of the writing activities but could not quite remember whether they were called "logs" or "catalogs." Jason also initiated discussion on the topic of favorite books, and subsequently the conversation moved from favorite books to favorite parts of Book Club such as putting on skits of the books for each other and for other classrooms. These first negotiations among the children foreshadow positioning moves that were made later in the process of writing the chapter.

When we examined the list of categories resulting from the July 16, 1993 meeting, we discovered that all the children's initial ideas were reflected in the five categories: (1) what we wrote in our logs; (2) how we did Book Club in other grades; (3) what we liked about Book Club; (4) favorite parts of Book Club, and (5) what made a good group. It is even more interesting to note that the structure of the chapter emerging from the September 28, 1993, meeting included the very same details although subsumed under three categories or sections, rather than five. (1) what Book Club includes; (2) how things which were important to us worked e.g. logs, and (3) favorites of Book Club. We also noted that this new three-category structure of September 28, 1993 is derived from, but departs somewhat from the original five-category structure that the participants came up with on July 16, 1993. In the subsequent section, we explore how this happened through the interactions between the adults (Taffy & Cindy) and the three children.

In the next section, we examine the evolution of these categories from the perspective of the nature of the negotiations between the adults (Cindy, Laura, & Taffy) and the three children, and among the children themselves. We believe that an examination of such negotiations serves the dual purposes of helping us to understand the role of the adult participants (i.e., Cindy, Laura, & Taffy) in the student collaborative writing activity, as well as to make explicit the nature of the planning process in which the children engaged.

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Evolution of the Categories in Terms of the Positioning that Occurred Among Participants

The initial meeting on May 14, 1993 between Cindy and the three children stands out in terms of the spontaneity of interactions among the three children. As shown in our earlier analysis, Cindy primarily positioned herself in the roles of facilitator and scaffolder/mediator. Her role actively involved questioning and revoicing in order to elicit ideas from the children. Our focus now shifts to the interactions among the children themselves. The feature that stands as we examine the transcript and listen to the audio tape is the extent to which the children elaborate on and build upon one another's contributions to the conversation. We noted that as soon as one of the three children brought up a topic, the other two were quick to add to or elaborate on the original idea. Furthermore, Jason noticeably supported a great number of ideas mentioned by Chrystal. The following two excerpts from the transcript illustrate the spontaneity of Jason's support for Chrystal. Note how Jason complements Chrystal's statements below with the words "all the schools should have it" and "It's a learning process."

C: I think that, um, Book Club was part of our things. You know Book Club is something that we should have all the years because

J: all the schools should have it.

C: Yah.

J: Yah.

C: It should be something that everybody should have.

J: It's like a learning process.

In the second excerpt below, we have another example of how Jason spontaneously supports Chrystal:

C: Not having a giant peach or something

J: the Giant peach I didn't... I... that story didn't make sense just like

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Chrystal said.

C: It didn't make sense at all.

J: No.

Similarly, Chrystal reciprocates by prompting as well as supporting Jason:

C: I think another good part of it was when we were doing the skits...

What was your favorite part, Jason?

J: My favorite part?

C: Yeah, yours.

J: Um, I thought it was neat when everybody else was in the classroom and they went into the hallway and ...

C: they let them have their own conversation out there?

J: Yeah. It wasn't so noisy and you couldn't hear everything that was going on in the classroom.

We assert that it was the nature of the brainstorming as well as the presence of an adult who asked to be informed about the Book Club Program that resulted in the congruent nature of the interactions among the children, particularly between Jason and Chrystal. Cindy, by indicating her curiosity about Book Club, had positioned the children as Book Club experts. The children responded to her needs collectively, mutually supporting each other as they played the role of Book Club experts. Ideas were simultaneously brought up by all of the children, although Jean tended to talk less than either Jason or Chrystal. This May 14, 1993 tape and transcript illustrate how the children excitedly recalled their common experiences as elementary students in Book Club. Although many ideas were brought up by the children during this brainstorming session, there was no sign of the emergence of clear categories from this early meeting.

We now move to July 9, 1993 (the fifth meeting) and look more closely at the nature of negotiations between Cindy and two of the child authors, Chrystal and

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Jason. (Jean was not present at this meeting). The nature of interactions can be studied through the responses to two questions that Cindy asked. The first was whether the children had anything else to include in the chapter that they had not discussed before. The second question was whether the children had any suggestions about how they would like to go about writing the chapter.

We find Cindy offering the children opportunities, as befitting their positions as young Book Club experts, to make decisions about and during the planning process. In asking the second question - whether the children had any ideas about how they should go about writing the chapter - Cindy served more as a co-participant than an instructor, scaffolder, or facilitator in her interaction with the two children. Other than Chrystal's suggestion that they go through a previous transcript to recall ideas, the discussion did not appear to make any progress. Faced with such a situation, the fluidity of Cindy's adult role was evident in her next move. Cindy brought up the possibility that they use edited conversations in their writing. She explained what these were, essentially indicating that it meant her taking the children's words from the transcripts (editing them slightly with the children's approval) and including them under the major headings that they would decide to include in the chapter. Interestingly, this adult suggestion found its way into the ultimate construction of the book chapter in only a minimal way.

While Cindy felt that edited conversations would be time-saving, she had concerns over the issue of control over the writing process. She expressed her fears to the children that if she were to use the words of the children and then attempt edited conversations, she would essentially be taking control over the writing process from them. There were no clear decisions made at this meeting. Chrystal reiterated that she wanted to go over a previous transcript to see what they had said, as well as to go over Cindy's notes occasionally. This shows an early attempt by Chrystal to take control over the writing process. In fact, we saw multiple examples

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of such attempts in the drafting process. Essentially by this move on Chrystal's part, she was positioning Cindy as a "secretary" to record the children's ideas, but not to have the final say about where, how, or if these ideas would play out in the actual writing of the chapter. When the meeting ended, there was still no evidence that the children had identified any categories for guiding a draft. In fact, Cindy mentioned that they should try to "generate major categories" the next time they met.

July 16, 1993, marks an advance in coming up with tentative categories for the book chapter. Here we examined the nature of interaction between two adults, Cindy and Laura, as well as the nature of interaction between Laura and two of the three children Jason and Chrystal. Laura, the students' fifth grade teacher, attended the meeting at Cindy's request. We have an unusual case of two adults silmultaneously occupying the teacher role here, and the negotiation between the two adults contributed greatly to the student collaborative writing process. Mid-way during the meeting, when the discussion did not seem to be making any headway, Laura asked Cindy pointedly about what they were trying to do. The following conversation shows the nature of the interaction between the two adults:

L: What do we need to be doing ... here? Try to organ ... trying to make like an outline? or?

C: ...talk (and get) some major categories...

L: And then we can pull from what they (the children) had already said (during previous meetings)?

C: We could do some pulling from what they said ...

L: ... If we had ... major categories, ... like we decide we want to talk about the logs as a major category ... and if we want to talk about a certain book or something or whatever.. than we could, you know list things underneath ... we would want to put it general though like...

Ci: Well, that the thing that we have to decide, it's, it's kind of up to

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everybody ... what t they want and how they want it done ... once we get those categories ... see what fits there ... then we can come together with what we've got written and people can see if...

L: ... they agree with each other.

In the above interchange, we see Cindy subtly assigning Laura the role of facilitator. At the same time, by indicating that the children will also partake in the decision-making process ("...it's kind of up to everybody..."), Laura responds appropriately by completing Cindy's half-formed statement, "... they agree with each other." We see two adults here mutually endorsing the rights of the child authors to decide on what they want to include in the chapter. Laura recognizes her task not as generating categories for the book chapter for the children, but drawing them out based on previous discussions with and among the children.

We found that once Laura's role was made explicit, the participants made rapid progress in terms of starting a tentative list of categories. This happened just as Jason, who had to leave early, prepared to leave. As Jason was leaving, his short conversation with Laura resulted in the initial generation of the July 16 outline:

L: (To Cindy) Well, we don't have the categories for him to (take home)...

(to Jason) Is there anything right now off the top of your head that you want included?

J: Best book club, best book club you had.

(Laura makes a reference to logs that Jason had brought up at an earlier time, and asks Jason to explain what he had in mind then.)

J: ... (I want to include) in what year. . (and) what happened if you can remember it.

L: ... your interpretation of those, ... what you think it is,

why you do it or give examples of when you've used it. That might be more h= helpful.

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(Cindy asks Jason if there's anything else.)

J: Best book?

L: Favorites. We can have a section called favorites.

J: I had that! Didn't I have that?

L: You may have. I steal people's ideas from people who have got (good?)ideas.

The conversation above is important for several reasons. First, we have to note that the July 16, 1993, categories did not come from any one person alone. As mentioned earlier the major ideas came out of the May 14, 1993 meeting. Jason, though, was the one who first brought up the idea of favorite books and the importance of writing (logs). Ideas about the best book club originated from the collective views of Jean who talked about the value of a group setting, and Chrystal who talked about conversations, leadership, and shy people working in groups. The conversation between Jason and Laura is important for a second reason: This is one of the first instances where we see Jason, or any of the children, claiming ownership over an original idea. We find Laura playfully responding to Jason's claim that she "steals ideas" from others. In later transcripts during the drafting stage, we find increasingly more instances of the children, particularly Chrystal and Jason, attempting to appropriate control over ideas to be included in the chapter, or over the process of writing.

The same conversation is important for a third reason: Through Jason's identification of key points like "Best book club," "Favorites" and logs, Laura made quick progress with her list of categories. The exchange between Jason and Laura is important for a fourth reason: The list of categories that Laura subsequently gave to Cindy underwent some obvious change. Instead of "Favorite books," there are two categories into which favorite books could fit into: "What we liked about Book Club" and "Favorite Parts of Book Club." Instead of "Best book club," it became "What made a good group."

On examining the rest of the conversation, we found Laura and Chrystal going through an old transcript carefully, and finally drawing from it the five categories mentioned earlier as signifying the first transition point. These five categories did not come from Laura but originated from the things that the children had said in an earlier transcript as well as from the conversation with Jason just before he left. After Jason left, Laura sought confirmation only from Chrystal (since Jean was unavailable) regarding the categories she saw emerging from the transcript. Chrystal was in agreement, and said that she could not think of categories other than the five that they had listed.

We now move to September 28, 1993 which we had earlier identified as the second transition point in the planning phase. At this meeting, there are indications that the drafting process had still not started, and that the children still weren't comfortable with the list of categories they had generated earlier. At the groups' invitation, Taffy attended the meeting with the explicit request to assist the group to move ahead in the project. Thus, Taffy was positioned by the group to facilitate the groups' progress. As will be discussed later, this positioning move shaped the manner in which Taffy positioned herself in the meeting.

At this meeting, then, we have a similar situation to the meeting with Laura, Cindy, and the students where we see two adults simultaneously occupying the teacher role in the collaborative writing process. In many ways, this meeting resembled the July 16, 1993, meeting where Laura was present. Just as Laura was a guest, so was Taffy. Just as Laura depended on Cindy to give an indication of her role at the meeting, so did Taffy. Just as Laura facilitated the generation of categories to work with, so did Taffy facilitate the writing process with a revised three-category structure for the book chapter. On both occasions, Cindy discreetly paved the way for another adult to help in the collaborative writing process.

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We now look at how some of Taffy's comments contributed to the revised structure for the book chapter that eventually launched the children into the drafting phase of the writing process. An important point to note is that Taffy primarily asked questions, listened to the children talk, and took notes during the first two-thirds of the September 28, 1994, meeting. After listening to the children and taking notes during the first part of the meeting, Taffy shared a tentative list of categories with the children. Taffy started of by revoicing some of the children's earlier ideas; she attributed the structure that she had drawn up solely to the children's sharing of their thoughts and views about the book chapter:

Taffy: *... I was just making notes about what I thought a good structure for the beginning of the chapter might be. You want me to share those with you? Just based on what you were saying?...*

It seems like you might want to start out by saying something about what you think Book Club includes, and you got a good list to start with -- your logs, um, and group posters and ... writing sorts of things. And you talked about, um, your groups making cranes and doing skits, the literature - the books that you read, it had to be like the good literature ...and class sharing time ... you could probably write that up right now ...And then after you did that, you could say that there're some things which seem very important to you that, um, and what you want to do is spend sometime talking about how you saw those things working. And the thing that I keep hearing over and over again that was really important to you was the writing part of it -- the reading logs you were doing.

Then your favorites of book club would come ... 'cos now you've talked about the first section, so you move in to your sec ... favorites of book club, and you've already got a good list there ...and it seems likes you know, you've almost got a whole chapter there

In examining the above excerpt, we analyzed how Taffy positioned herself and was positioned by the other participants in the meeting. Just as the short conversation between Jason and Laura on July 16, 1993, raised many issues for us to ponder, so does the above excerpt. Taffy seemingly synthesized the views of the three children based on what she had heard them say. In this sense, she played the same role as Laura: She facilitated the writing process by coming up with a structure that essentially was built on the children's ideas. In doing so, she enabled Cindy and the children to move from the planning phase to the drafting phase of the writing process. But at a deeper level of our reading of her comments, her role extends beyond that of facilitator. Looking closely at the transcript, we discovered that the new list of important categories was quite elaborate:

1. What Book Club Includes:

logs

group posters

groups

fun activities (making cranes, skits)

good literature

class sharing time

2. Things which are important to us and how they worked:

reading logs

different log choices

how log choices were taught, and how they can be done differently

individual log pages in the chapter

3. Favorites of Book Club

Thus, following Cindy's lead in terms of helping to position the group to move forward in the drafting process while still maintaining the children's position as authorities regarding content of information to be included in the chapter, Taffy's

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role resembled that of a more knowledgeable other in comparison to the other participants in the study. Through her "monologue," she made suggestions as to how the participants could proceed with drafting the chapter. In doing so, she simultaneously, scaffolded and facilitated the planning process. She not only affirmed the efforts of Cindy and the three children, but enabled them to move forward through re-organizing an outline that Cindy indicated had earlier broken down. Her comments before she left Cindy and the children are interpreted as a green light that the drafting phase could start: *I'm almost hearing -- I hate to say this because I know this is the hardest part -- it almost seems like you've to move from your ideas to actually writing it up. concluding paragraphs for results section.*

Thus, the manner in which the students and Cindy positioned Taffy to assist with the process of completing the chapter served three important functions. First, positioning Taffy as someone who could *help* with the writing process preserved the children's roles as "authority." They maintained control of the content of the chapter; they also reserved the right to accept or reject the ideas that Taffy offered. Second, inviting Taffy to assist the group preserved Cindy's stance as facilitator and not director for the writing process. The group had reached a stumbling block in their work. Cindy did not tell them what they must do to resolve their dilemma. Rather, the group invited Taffy to offer suggestions for their consideration. Finally, inviting Taffy to offer her suggestions/ideas enabled the group to move ahead with the project.

DISCUSSION

In this study we sought to explore how the concept of positioning can serve as an explanatory tool for examining the nature of interacions among participants in a collaborative writing project. Further, we wished to study the ways in which participants in this project positioned themselves around issues relative to creating the collaboratively written text.

One key tenet of a social historical perspective is that higher mental processes such as those involved in reading, writing, and academic discourse are social and cultural in nature. Educators that embrace a social historical perspective towards learning, then, place a premium on fostering social interactions (teacher/student & student/student) in the classroom. Clearly, however, not just any social interactions between members in a classroom foster learning. To talk about the potential of such interactions for enhancing learning, we need more sophisticated tools that can capture the dynamic relationships that occur during these interactions.

Harré and colleagues (1990 & 1991) argue that, as an educational research community, we must employ more complex means of studying human learning in conjunction with changing theoretical conceptions that place a much greater emphasis on social, cultural, and historical explanations of human cognition. Positioning is one such powerful construct that can be used within the theoretical framework of social historical theory to help explain the social and situated nature of learning. In the remainder of this section, we present a scenario from our study, discuss a possible approach for analyzing the scenario, and then discuss what the concept of positioning "buys us" in terms of an explanatory tool as we explore the theoretical and practical implications of using positioning to examine the interactions among participants in the scenario.

> ***Scenario.*** *Towards the end of the planning phase of the collaborative writing project (approximately eight meetings into the project), the students and Cindy had reached a "block;" they weren't sure how to proceed. The group had generated many different categories they considered important, however, they weren't quite comfortable with the structure of the categories they had generated nor were they certain how to proceed. Cindy wanted to maintain the students' authority over the process and the product, but she wasn't sure how to do so without assuming total control and "telling" the students what to*

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do next. She and the students decided to ask for Taffy's assistance; she joined the participants at their September 28, 1993, meeting.

A typical approach for examining the above scenario might include classifying a general, somewhat static, role assumed by each participant in the conversational encounter. As such, Taffy would undoubtedly have been considered the "expert" being called in to remedy the problematic situation, Cindy the facilitator/participant, and the children the participants--the roles of Cindy and the children being primarily recipients of Taffy's knowledge and expertise. Ascribing a "role" (or one of several different roles) to the participants involved in the project, however, does little to explain how or why the participants are placed in particular roles, nor, does it help us to understand the complexities of the interactions between participants.

Considering this scenario using the lens of positioning, on the other hand, allows for a much more sophisticated examination of the interactions among participants. We begin this discussion by asserting that in student/student and or teacher/student interactions, power (authority) differentials will always exist. These power (authority) differentials can and do vary from context to context depending upon such factors as individual personality characteristics of the participants involved, particular circumstances surrounding the interactions, etc. Further, power (authority) issues can have a tremendous impact on the ways in which participants position themselves and are positioned by others in conversational exchanges. We intentionally selected the scenario above because it has the potential for the greatest power differential. In the scenario above, participants include a university professor, three middle-school children, and a graduate student.

Davies and Harré (1990) suggest that positioning must be understood in terms of conversants' purposes, ways conversants conceive of themselves and others, and culturally-determined ways of perceiving interactions across different settings and

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time frames. Further, Davies and Harré suggest that conversants develop conceptions of their positions and the positions of others based on two sources of experience: *Indexical extension* (which refers to personal experiences) and *typification extension* (which refers to culturally established experiences). We explore issues relating to the scenario described above in light of each of the points raised by Davies and Harré.

Conversants' purposes in the scenario described above were varied, but related. The students and Cindy sought guidance from Taffy. Cindy maintained ongoing concern that the assistance the students receive from any adults be enough to be supportive, yet not so much as to infringe upon students' authority over process or product. The children wished to receive help on the process, but were quite confident in their knowledge of Book Club. Like Cindy, Taffy wanted to provided the assistance she felt the participants needed, but not assume control over the students' work and ideas.

Typically, professors and teachers conceive of themselves as more knowledgeable others and helpers in educational encounters . Students, on the other hand, often see their roles as less knowledgeable others and helped. The students in this study, however, had unique indexical experiences upon which to draw that shaped both their conceptions of themselves and their conceptions of Taffy and Cindy. Further, neither Taffy nor Cindy saw her position as a "typical" adult/teacher position. We explain the students' unique indexical experiences below before moving to a brief discussion of Taffy and Cindy.

The students had extensive past experiences engaging in Book Club during fourth and fifth grades where they had the power to interpret text in ways that were meaningful to them. Further, in Book Club, they learned that their voices "counted." Therefore, the students had pertinent personal histories they could draw upon for this collaborative writing project. The indexical experiences from which the

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children drew in addition to the way in which Cindy attempted to position them in collaborative writing meetings during this project, we argue, may have been why they so readily positioned themselves as the experts on Book Club in the collaborative writing project. Therefore, the kids had a lot to draw on relative to their own histories and their previous interactions with Cindy that affected their positions in the September 28, 1994, meeting with Taffy.

Taffy and Cindy also drew on experiences (*indexical*--or, personal and *typification*--or, cultural) that primarily involved working extensively with children in "typical" teacher positions. This conflict between Taffy and Cindy's purpose (i.e., to maintain the students' authority over writing process and written product) and their prior experiences working with children, created a tension that they had to negotiate in order to work with the children to successfully "pull off" an acceptable solution to the stumbling block the children were facing in the writing process. For them, an acceptable solution meant to provide the children with the guidance they needed while keeping the process and product authentic--that is, really the children's work.

As the brief, and far from complete, analysis of the above scenario suggests, the concept of positioning can serve as a powerful means for examining the complexities of dynamic conversational encounters. Further, our discussion of the above scenario, in particular, and this overall study in general, helps to elucidate some to the contributions that positioning can make as an explanatory tool in small group interactions such as collaborative writing encounters. These contributions have both theoretical and practical implications. We discuss theoretical implications first below and then move to a discussion of practical implications.

On a broad theoretical scale, as we move from transmission approaches to teaching and learning to more social interactive approaches to teaching and learning, we need explanatory tools for effectively studying social interactions

among students and between teachers and students. If we embrace the notion that thought occurs as a result of interactions in our social cultural environment, then having a means by which to examine those complex interactions becomes crucial. Positioning, we argue, serves as one tool for examining these complex social interactions.

On a narrower scale related more specifically to language use, the concept of *voice* is central to the work of Bakhtin and collaborative writing researchers such as DiPardo and Freedman. *Voice*, for these scholars, relates to language users' intentions and perspectives. Positioning can serve as a tool for exploring language users' intentions and perspectives in conversational encounters. Further, from a social historical perspective, intentions and perspectives are created and shaped in social encounters. Positioning can serve as a valuable tool for exploring the manner in which intentions and perspectives are formed and reformed in social encounters. Thus, positioning can also serve as a means for exploring Bakhtin's concept of*dialogicality*. That is, positioning can help us to explore the question: How do speakers effectively orient themselves with respect to one another in conversational exchanges? The answer to this question is, for Bakhtin, the essence of true understanding.

There are also important practical implications relative to the concept of positioning as it may be applied to classroom settings. Positioning helps us to understand more about the nuances of helping students work effectively in groups. Assigning static roles (i.e., recorder, leader, etc.) to students in groups can be problematic. The roles that we, as teachers, assign to students might not "fit." While it may be useful to assign roles when students are engaging in rote memory work such as drilling on learned skills, such assignments become problematic when the focus is on meaningful interactions in authentic conversational encounters since it is difficult (if not impossible) to predetermine who might be best situated to perform

particular functions in group encounters. It seems that students would position and reposition one another in authentic group interactions regardless of the roles that we may assign them as group members.

A related, but slightly different notion, is that if we (as teachers) want to learn to help improve students' interactions with one another during social encounters, we can not just examine each individual student and the role that she may play in a group encounter. We must take a more systems approach and examine the ways in which conversants interact with one another in small group social encounters. Further, we need to examine the ways in which the small groups function in the broader classroom community. We argue here that the concept of positioning can help us to explore and develop understandings of the complex interrelationships that occur between students and between teachers and students when more authentic social interactions are encouraged in the classroom.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, this entire study grew out of an authentic collaborative writing task between three children and three adults. We conclude by briefly over viewing our conception of how that project "played out" relative to the concept of positioning.

We believe that the students' voices were truly privileged in this project. The students' chapter is comprised of their ideas. However, the adults did play an essential role in the project: they positioned the students to progress in the construction of the chapter. In this study, we gave an accounting of the ways in which the students' ideas played out in the process of writing the paper and the ways in which the adults worked with the children to provide the support they needed to construct a chapter for publication. We conclude with an excerpt from the final chapter. This is Jean's *voice*.

Jean's concluding comment in the students' Book Club chapter

Chrystal, Jason, and I did Book Club in fourth and fifth grade, so we knew how to have good conversations, and we knew a lot about Book Club. We worked as a team to write our chapter, but we didn't always agree on everything. We (the kids) decided what we wanted to write in the chapter. Cindy asked us questions about things that a teacher might ask us as we were writing our chapter. No one was really the boss. We all four worked together as a team.

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